

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 05046 100627Z

13

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAM-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 EB-11 /114 W

----- 030868

R 091537Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9690

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 5046

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: JUAN CARLOS CHAIRS CABINET MEETING:
FRANCO'S HEALTH

1. TODAY, PRINCE JUAN CARLOS, ACTING CHIEF OF STATE "IN FUNCTIONS", PRESIDED FOR THE FIRST TIME OVER A SPANISH CABINET MEETING. THE MEETING WAS HELD AT THE PARDO PALACE RESIDENCE OF GENERAL FRANCO, DESPITE FACT FRANCO DID NOT ATTEND. THE MEETING LARGELY DEALT WITH A SERIES OF ECONOMIC MEASURES, AND REPORTEDLY SOME 70 DRAFT DECREES COVERING A BROAD RANGE OF SUBJECTS, MOSTLY OF AN ECONOMIC NATURE, WERE APPROVED. THE CABINET MEETING APPEARS SIGNIFICANT PRIMARILY BECAUSE IT IS ONE OF THE FEW ACTIONS OF THE PRINCE IN HIS CURRENT INTERIM CAPACITY WHICH HAS CONVEYED THE APPEARANCE OF REAL POWER. HOWEVER, SOMEWHAT DIMINISHING THE IMPACT OF HIS PRESIDING OVER THIS CABINET MEETING WAS THE FACT IT WAS HELD IN FRANCO'S PARDO PALACE, PERHAPS UNDERLINING THAT JUAN CARLOS MUST STILL OPERATE IN FRANCO'S SHADOW.

2. WITH RESPECT TO FRANCO'S HEALTH, SPANISH PRESS REPORTS
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PAGE 02 MADRID 05046 100627Z

THAT FRANCO CONTINUES HIS GRADUAL RECOVERY AT PARDO. NOT-

WITHSTANDING THIS, THERE ARE WIDESPREAD RUMORS CIRCULATING THAT FRANCO HAS SUFFERED PROBLEMS IN RECENT DAYS, SUCH AS CIRCULATORY PROBLEMS AND A RENEWED INFLAMATION OF HIS PHLEBITIC LEG.

3. ARRANGEMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE FOR FRANCO STAFF AND ESCORTS TO TRAVEL TO GALICIA HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN CANCELLED; HOWEVER PRESS REPORTS THAT FOUR CABINET MEMBERS HAVE MADE RESERVATIONS AT HOTEL IN SANTIAGO FOR 12-17 AUGUST. APPARENT CANCELLATION, OR AT LEAST POSTPONEMENT, OF HIS PLANS TO GO TO GALICIA, HAVE FURTHER FUELED RUMORS ABOUT HIS STATE OF HEALTH. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT, AT A MINIMUM, RECOVERY WILL BE SLOW AND DIFFICULT.

4. ADDITIONALLY, THE PERSISTENT SPECULATIONS LAST WEEK THAT FRANCO WOULD SHORTLY TAKE BACK HIS FULL FUNCTIONS AS CHIEF OF STATE HAS ALSO SUBSIDED AND THERE NOW APPEARS TO BE GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT HE IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE BACK THOSE FUNCTIONS FOR SOME TIME, IF AT ALL, BECAUSE OF HIS DELICATE OVERALL STATE OF HEALTH.

5. THERE ARE ALSO MANY RUMORS THAT FRANCO'S SON-IN-LAW, DR. MARTINEZ BORDIU, THE MARQUES OF VILLAVERDE, HAS RECENTLY GOTTEN INTO HEATED ARGUMENTS WITH FRANCO'S PERSONAL PHYSICIAN, DR. VICENTE GIL, AND WITH OTHERS OF THE DOCTORS ATTENDING FRANCO, OVER THE MEDICAL TREATMENT WHICH SHOULD BE PRESCRIBED FOR THE CAUDILLO, AND THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT THE MARQUES MAY EVEN BE TAKING OVER CHARGE OF HIS FATHER-IN-LAWS MEDICAL TREATMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CABINET, HEALTH, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 09 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MADRID05046
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740219-0887
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740861/aaaabzwww.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <24 APR 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <27 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: JUAN CARLOS CHAIRS CABINET MEETING: FRANCO'S HEALTH
TAGS: PINT, SP, (CARLOS, JUAN), (FRANCO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005